NEWS ANALYSIS NO. 1-0580 APRIL 15, 1976
RONALD J. DUNLAVEY

THE UNITED STATES AND THE LEBANESE CRISIS

ANNCR:

VOA NEWS ANALYST RONALD J. DUNLAVEY DISCUSSES RECENT DEVELOPMENTS IN THE LEBANESE CRISIS, AND THE AMERICAN ROLE IN ATTEMPTING TO PROMOTE A PEACEFUL RESOLUTION OF THAT CRISIS:

VOICE:

THE SOUND OF SHOOTING IN LEBANON ECHOED THIS WEEK IN THE HALLS OF THE UNITED STATES CONGRESS. SECRETARY OF STATE KISSINGER, TESTIFYING BEFORE A CONGRESSIONAL COMMITTEE ABOUT AMERICAN FOREIGN POLICY, WAS CLOSELY QUESTIONED ABOUT LEBANON, AND TOOK THE OPPORTUNITY TO PUT ON RECORD HIS VIEWS ABOUT THE PROSPECTS FOR A SETTLEMENT, ABOUT THE DANGERS OF SYRIAN INTERVENTION, AND ABOUT AMERICAN EFFORTS TO HELP RESOLVE THE CRISIS.

HE WAS CAUTIOUSLY OPTIMISTIC ABOUT THE CHANCES FOR A SETTLEMENT; THE OUTLINE OF SUCH A SETTLEMENT, SAID MR. KISSINGER, IS BEGINNING TO EMERGE, AND THE SITUATION HAS IMPROVED OVER WHAT IT WAS THREE WEEKS AGO. BUT HE LIKENED THE POLITICAL CRISIS IN LEBANON TO A MINE-FIELD, AND WARNED THAT THERE COULD BE AN EXPLOSION AT ANY MOMENT. HE ALSO MADE IT CLEAR THAT EXPLOSION COULD AFFECT NOT ONLY LEBANON ITSELF BUT THE WHOLE MIDDLE EAST.

THE BIG DANGER, OF COURSE, IS THAT OF A SERIES OF MOVES AND COUNTER-MOVES BY SYRIA AND ISRAEL. SYRIAN TROOPS ARE NOW KNOWN TO BE IN LEBANON IN AN EFFORT TO ENFORCE THE SYRIAN-SPONSORED FORMULA FOR A POLITICAL SETTLEMENT. THAT FORMULA HAS CONSIDERABLE SUPPORT, BUT EVEN AMONG THOSE WHO SUPPORT IT THERE IS CONCERN THAT THE SYRIAN TROOPS MIGHT MOVE TOO FAR. THIS WOULD INCREASE ISRAEL'S FEARS FOR ITS SECURITY, AND HEIGHTEN THE DANGER

OF AN ISRAELI COUNTER- INCURSION INTO LEBANON. ASIDE FROM THE THREAT TO LEBANON'S OWN TERRITORIAL INTEGRITY, THERE WOULD BE AN OBVIOUS DANGER OF A SYRIAN-ISRAELI CONFRONTATION THAT COULD TRIGGER A NEW MIDDLE EAST WAR.

IN THIS SITUATION, THE AMERICAN ROLE HAS APPARENTLY BEEN MORE SIGNIFICANT THAN HAD BEEN SUSPECTED. THIS DOES NOT MEAN THAT THE UNITED STATES IS BACKING ANY CANDIDATE IN THE LEBANESE POLITICAL CONFLICT---ALTHOUGH WASHINGTON IS KNOWN TO FAVOR ACCEPTANCE BY ALL FACTIONS OF THE SYRIAN-SPONSORED SETTLEMENT FORMULA. WHERE THE AMERICAN ROLE IS MOST IMPORTANT, IT WOULD SEEM, IS IN WORKING TO PREVENT THE HIGHLY UNDESIRABLE CONFRONTATION BETWEEN SYRIA AND ISRAEL. THE UNITED STATES HAS WARNED SYRIA AGAINST MOVING ITS TROOPS TOO FAR, NOTING THAT THEY ARE GETTING CLOSE TO THE POINT WHERE THE ISRAELIS WOULD CONSIDER REACTION IMPERATIVE. AT THE SAME TIME, WASHINGTON HAS STRONGLY DISCOURAGED ISRAEL FROM TAKING ANY PRECIPITOUS ACTIONS, AND ACCORDING TO MR. KISSINGER THE ISRAELI RESPONSE HAS BEEN CONSTRUCTIVE. "NEITHER WE NOR THE ISRAELIS," HE TOLD THE CONGRESSMEN, "BELIEVES THAT THE SYRIAN ACTIONS IN LEBANON ARE A THREAT TO THE SECURITY OF ISRAEL." BUT, HE ADDED, IT IS A SITUATION THAT BEARS WATCHING.

THE IMPRESSION WHICH MOST OBSERVERS HAVE GOTTEN IS THAT NEITHER SYRIA NOR ISRAEL CARES FOR SUCH A CONFRONTATION---AND THAT ON BOTH SIDES A CONSIDERABLE MEASURE OF SELF-CONTROL IS BEING EXERCISED. THE CHIEF DANGER IS THAT THE POLITICAL CRISIS WITHIN LEBANON MIGHT WORSEN TO THE POINT WHERE ONE OR THE OTHER WOULD FEEL ITSELF FORCED TO TAKE MILITARY MEASURES WHICH THE OTHER

WOULD NOT TOLERATE. AND THAT DANGER UNDERLINES THE URGENT IMPORTANCE OF A PEACEFUL SETTLEMENT OF THE LEBANESE POLITICAL CRISIS---PREFERABLY WITHOUT FURTHER DELAY.

END